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DIONYSUS IN ARISTOPHANES

by

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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and that they recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled

DIONYSUS IN ARISTOPHANES

submitted by Frances Marilyn Stickney in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

The investigation summarized in this thesis has been carried out to discover what Dionysus is in the writings of Aristophanes. In the extant plays and fragments, references to Dionysus lend themselves to classification. He appears primarily as the protagonist in the Frogs. He is also mentioned as the god of productive nature and the god of drama.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the investigation summarized in this thesis has been to discover what Dionysus is in the pages of Aristophanes. What sort of personality and god is he? We know, or at least we can determine, what others thought of him, but what did Aristophanes think of him? What did Aristophanes make of him? What can we glean about Dionysus in the comedies and fragments thereof? It is felt that these details may be useful and certainly must be pin-pointed, perhaps isolated, if a thorough understanding of this god is to be reached.

The Dionysus with whom we are here concerned was a popular Greek deity of the fifth century B.C. At any rate, by the second half of the fifth century, Dionysus held an unquestioned position among the twelve Olympians.[1]

The festivals connected with the worship of Dionysus were particularly important to literature and art; for it was at these

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[1] W.K.C. Guthrie, The Greeks and Their Gods (London: Methuen and Company Limited, 1950), p. 111. Guthrie points out that the god, Dionysus, was represented along with Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Athene, Hephaestos, Aphrodite and Ares on the eastern frieze of the Parthenon. Thus by 432 B.C. at the latest, Dionysus was included in the circle of Olympian gods. Cf. Charles Seltman, The Twelve Olympians and their Guests (London: Max Parrish, 1956), p. 171.

festivals that dramas, presented as an act of worship to the god, came to be performed.[1] As the patron god of drama, Dionysus, as may be expected, was mentioned in tragedies and comedies.

The surviving plays and fragments of Aristophanes have been examined. It has been found that references to Dionysus lend themselves to simple classification; the classes are three and coincident with chapters II-IV hereafter.

In Aristophanes' extant comedies the deity is mentioned in connection with sacred rites and festivals. He was also presented as a character in at least two Aristophanic comedies, the Babylonians[2] and the Frogs. Unfortunately only scattered fragments[3] of the former work have survived, and it is felt that these fragments fail to give a coherent picture of Dionysus. The Frogs, then, will be the source used in studying Dionysus as a character in Aristophanes.

In this thesis, I shall deal with Dionysus, the character, as he is seen in the Frogs, and Dionysus, the god, as he is mentioned in the pages of Aristophanes. I shall attempt to show that Dionysus is treated as a god by Aristophanes, but that in the Frogs, where he acts as a character, he is treated as a human.

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[1]Margarete Bieber, The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 51.

[2]Theodorus Kock, Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta (Lipsiae: in Aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1880), I. p. 410, frag. 70. (Athenaeus 11, 494d). Cf. Gilbert Norwood, Greek Comedy (Boston: John W. Luce and Company Inc., 1932), p. 282-287.

[3]Kock, op.cit., pp. 407-416, frags. 64-99.

CHAPTER II

(THE PERSON OF) DIONYSUS IN FROGS

Aristophanes' play, the Frogs, has as protagonist the god, Dionysus.[1] In the Prologue (1-208)[2] Dionysus, accompanied by Xanthias, his slave, sets out for Hades to bring back to earth Euripides,[3] a "genuine" poet. The various "routes" to Hades, and the events which occur before Dionysus embarks in the boat of Charon are set forth. The remainder of the comedy has its setting in the underworld.

The frogs, whose song forms a false Parodos[4] (209-268), give the play its name. The Prologue continues with a description of the trip of Dionysus and Xanthias through the infernal region (269-322).

A Chorus of Initiates sing the verses of the Parodos (323-459). Episodes follow (460-673) in which Dionysus, now at the halls of Hades, knocks and announces himself. Dionysus becomes involved in unexpected situations as he appears in his Heraclean costume. At

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[1]The Frogs was produced at the Lenaean Festival in 405 B.C., winning first prize. Kaibel, "Aristophanes," Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Buchhandlung, 1893), III, 981.

[2]F.W. Hall and W.M. Geldart (eds.)., Aristophanis Comoediae (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1951), II, O.U.P. is the basis for this analysis. Unless otherwise indicated, numbers in this thesis refer to verses of the Frogs.

[3]The play was performed soon after the death of Euripides.

[4]The parodos is the first entrance of the Chorus. The song of the frogs interrupts and divides the prologue. The actual chorus is sung by the Mystae.

last at the suggestion of Aeacus, he goes within the halls to allow Hades and Persephone to decide whether or not he is, as he affirms, the son of Zeus.

The Parabasis (674-737), which consists of personal lampooning and political advice, has nothing to do with Dionysus.[1]

In subsequent episodes (738-1499) occasion arises for Dionysus to serve as arbiter between the poets, Aeschylus and Euripides, as they engage in a literary contest. After he announces his decision as to which man he prefers, he is invited to feast before starting back to the upper world with the poet of his choice.

The Exodos (1500-1533) is composed of farewells, advice and songs of victory.

I. EPISODE (vv. 1-37)

In the introductory scene of the Frogs, the following characteristics of Dionysus are established:

He is fond of jokes (3-20, 21-32). In the opening lines of the comedy Dionysus assures his slave that he approves of a wide range of comicalities but detests trite jokes(e.g. πιέζομαι -3, ὡς θλίβομαι -5, χειρίδας -8, ἀποπαρδήσομαι -10). He reveals his sense of humor in his self-introduction: "I am Dionysus, the son of a wine-jar."

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[1]As the poet makes his address to the spectators through the chorus the action of the play is suspended and the actors leave the stage.

While Dionysus does not condemn obscene jokes, he does abhor those which are trite. He shows that his repertoire of interests includes obscenities, but that he is lively and intelligent enough to be bored with repetition.

He can be an easy-going master (10,20). Although, as will be evident later, Dionysus can deal summarily with his slave, he here permits Xanthias certain freedom in his choice of wisecracks: ὅ τι βούλει γε, πλήν ... (3). When Xanthias brings up the buffooneries in spite of his master's prohibitions, Dionysus does not exact punishment.

He plays at sophistry (23-32). Dionysus endeavours to engage his slave in a sophistical discussion. He maintains that the donkey, not Xanthias, is burdened with the traps. Xanthias, for his part, affirms that his aching shoulder furnishes evidence, at least to his own satisfaction, that he is indeed the burden-bearer.

Dionysus speaks sophistically, but while he is obviously playing at sophistry, he nonetheless knows what he is about. In this connection, it is remarkable, although perhaps not meaningful, that he uses σόφισμα rather than another word for witticism.

II. EPISODE (vv. 38-170)

In this scene in which Dionysus confers with Heracles concerning the "routes" to Hades, he is further characterized in the following way:

He is adventurous in spirit (68-70). Dionysus' self-confidence is shown as he commences his journey. A trip to Hades is a considerable undertaking as Heracles is quick to point out (136).

He is witty and adept at irony (48-50, 55, 107, 141-142). The wildly inventive tales which Dionysus relates illustrate his sense of humor. That Dionysus served on board ship is questionable; that he and Xanthias alone sank twelve or thirteen enemy crafts is ludicrous. He recounts the tales for fun.

Dionysus reminds Heracles that while he may give advice on eating, he is scarcely in a position to contribute intelligently to a discussion on literary criticism. Dionysus has the power of swift repartee: " δειπνεῖν με δίδασκε."

He is a person of ready wit (61-62). The point of resemblance between Heracles and himself he makes unhesitatingly and neatly:

ὅπως γε μέντοι σοι δι' αἰνιγμῶν ἐρῶ.
ἦδη ποτ' ἐπεθύμησας ἐξαίφνης ἔτνους;

He is a "literary critic" (66-69, 73-75, 80, 83-84, 86, 92-97, 98-107). As a "literary critic", Dionysus recognizes a clever poet (98-99), but despises degraders of the art (92-95). Although he affirms that he is infatuated with the works of Euripides, he scorns those who lack creativeness (96-97). His likes and dislikes are pronounced, and when asked to describe a genuinely creative genius, he furnishes examples of the poetry such a man might produce (100-102). He is persistent in defending his point of view.

It may be noted that even with Euripides' poetry he takes liberties. His venturous phrase, αἰθέρα Διὸς δωμάτιον, is a parody of αἰθέρ' οἴκησιν Διός , so that air becomes the shack of Zeus instead of his dwelling.[1]

He is a paradox (46-47). The appearance of Dionysus also serves to characterize him. The combination of lion-hide, yellow chiton, Heraclean club, and buskins presented an absurd sight, and therefore a comical one. The visual mixture may foreshadow an incongruous assemblage of personal traits.

III. EPISODE (vv. 171-179)

He is a businessman (171-179). Dionysus is here in this scene ὁ χρηματιστής , eager to barter, unwilling to be swindled. He is a shrewd bargainer, for instead of referring to the traps as τὰ σκεύη he describes them using the diminutive, τὰ σκευάρια . The corpse will not haggle, and Dionysus refuses to pay more, so the scene is short.

IV. EPISODE (vv. 180-270)

In this scene which Dionysus shares with Charon and the chorus of frogs, the following characteristics are portrayed:

He is persevering (268). Although Dionysus finds the oars (236) and the seat (221-222) abrasive, and the song of the frogs grating (240-241, 257), he perseveres in word and deed. In the con-

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[1]Charles William Peppler, Comic Terminations in Aristophanes and the Comic Fragments (Baltimore: John Murphy Co., 1902), p.10.

test for mastery which develops between Dionysus and the frogs, by varying the rhythms[1] and by using the song to his own advantage, Dionysus "out-coaxes" the frogs. His actions, which also suggest his persistence, in all likelihood endeared him to the audience. Dionysus' rowing and blisters would perhaps even encourage many spectators in their war-efforts and certainly remind them of the thetes who manned the fleet, the chief instrument of success in the war with Sparta. Dionysus, too, is a fighter.

He is the buffoon (184, 189, 198-199, 203-204, 221-222, 236-239). Dionysus greets Charon effusively, even idiotically, as if they were long-lost friends, when the case is that they had never met before. Dionysus can be idiotically ebullient if the spirit moves him.

The humor of this scene is based not so much on the words as on the gestures and antics which must have accompanied them. Obviously the actor could have employed a variety of amusing gestures in dramatizing the scene. Dionysus, after being instructed to sit to the oar (ἐπὶ κώπην), interprets this to mean sit on the oar. It is probably only after a great deal of "clowning" that he seats himself correctly.

Charon first sets the rowing beat with his ὦ ὀπὸπ ὦ ὀπόπ. The frogs, bursting out with their βρεκεκεκὲξ κοὰξ κοάξ, confuse the novice by means of the change in

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[1] W.B. Stanford (ed.), Aristophanes: The Frogs (London: MacMillan and Company, 1963), p. 93.

tempo, and continue to harry him by repeatedly switching from one meter to another. The reader, of course, can only imagine what sort of wild antics were performed by Dionysus.

The physical discomfiture experienced by Dionysus undoubtedly caused some sort of exaggerated demonstration. His gestures and antics would indicate that he is the βωμολόχος.

He is pot-bellied (200).

V. EPISODE (vv. 271-322)

Further points concerning the character of Dionysus are established in this scene in which he and Xanthias proceed through the infernal region.

He is cowardly (286-287, 296-300, 305-306, 308). No sooner does Dionysus express his desire to meet with some adventure worthy of the trip than Xanthias draws his attention to a noise. Dionysus without investigating further pleads for protection. Only a thrice-administered oath reassures him that the danger is past. In times of danger Dionysus calls upon others for protection; first Xanthias (286-287), then the priest (297).

He is capricious (286-291). Xanthias describes Empousa[1] as a bull, a mule, a beautiful girl and a dog in turn. Dionysus regis-

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[1]Friedrich Deubner (ed.), Scholia Graeca in Aristophanem (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1964), scholium on Ranae v. 293, p. 283. The scholiast notes that Empousa was a devilish phantom, who according to some was one-footed and according to others was of changing shapes.

ters fear, cowardice and delight. His whims change as swiftly as the shapes of Empousa.

VI. EPISODE (vv. 323-459)

In this scene, the Parodos, in which the Mystic Chorus plays the important role, very little opportunity to characterize Dionysus by drama is available.

He responds to the sight of female anatomy (414-415). When Dionysus catches sight of a pretty little girl whose tattered dress reveals her bosom, his response is: "Somehow I'm always ready to follow along, and sporting with her I wish to join in the chorus" (417-419). Herein Dionysus displays a normal, healthy interest in the opposite sex.

He is (again) master of a slave (441). Dionysus exerts his authority as he commands Xanthias to pick up the traps.

VII. EPISODE (vv. 460-502)

In this scene that pivots around Aeacus, his curses and threats, Dionysus exhibits further characteristics.

He is the most cowardly of gods and men (479-486). Aeacus who mistakes Dionysus for dog-snatching Heracles assails him with threats, and mindful of former wrongs suffered vows he will requite evil for evil. The violent threats which are hurled at Dionysus completely unnerve him.

He is a buffoon (479, 481-485, 489-491). After Dionysus, through fear, loses control of his rectal sphincter, he turns the situation into a humorous one by refusing to be labelled a coward, and by performing what he terms highly courageous actions. He is quick to defend himself, but sophistical. With the words ἐγκέχοδα· κάλει θεόν he makes a witty adaptation of the religious formula, ἐκκέχυται · κάλει θεόν .[1]

He is an opportunist of sorts (494-497). Xanthias' boast of his bravery gives Dionysus the opportunity to divest himself of the Heraclean costume.

VIII. EPISODE (vv. 503-548)

In this scene in which "Heracles" receives an invitation to dine, Dionysus displays the following characteristics:

He is dexterous in turning the situation to his own advantage (522-533). Dionysus quickly realizes that he has laid aside the Heraclean costume at a most inopportune time, for the maid extends to Xanthio-heracles an invitation to dine. After the flute-girl, dancing-girls and food have been described, Dionysus hastily strips the slave of the costume. Dionysus again becomes the imperious,

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[1] Ibid., scholium on Ranae v. 479, p. 290.

willful master. The chorus has a lively equation: Dionysus is a — Theramenes! (541)[1]

He, by self-description, feels the normal human sexual urges (542-548).

IX. EPISODE (vv. 549-604)

Dionysus, as he again faces danger, this time at the hands of the hostess and Plathane, appears as follows:

He is a coward (579-589). Dionysus, when threatened by the incensed women, asks Xanthias to make another exchange.

He is a wheedler (579-582). Dionysus quickly discovers that his Heraclean guise leads to more discomfort than pleasure, so again he foists it upon Xanthias. The use of the hypocoristic term, Ξανθίδιον , denotes that Dionysus is wheedling, not commanding, his slave.

X. EPISODE (vv. 605-674)

In this episode in which Aeacus and his associates administer punishment, Dionysus is shown to have the following characteristics:

He is divine (631).

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[1]Ibid., scholium on Ranae 541, p. 292. Theramenes was noted for his ability to adapt himself to the present situation. He was likened to the cothurnus which, due to its flexibility, could be worn on either foot.

He is the opportunist (635-636). In his attempt to escape impending punishment, he announces his divinity. When he finds that even this avowal will not save him he succeeds in getting Xanthias involved as well.

He shows courage (644-666). At first he is terror-stricken at the prospect of the whipping, but since he cannot forestall the flogging, he endures it, and remains courageous through it.

He has a sense of humor (647, 653-654, 659, 660-661, 664-666). Even when he is subjected to punishment, he is ready with jokes and quips.

XI. EPISODE (vv. 738-829)

Although Dionysus does not appear in this scene, he is described by the servant of Hades and by Xanthias.

He is a generous and noble master (738). The fact that Dionysus does not punish Xanthias for causing him to get involved in the whipping prompts the servant of Hades to comment upon Dionysus' nobility and leniency.

He is a "Don Juan" (740). The servant of Hades expresses his admiration for Dionysus and describes him as a "noble master." Xanthias facetiously queries, πῶς γὰρ οὐχὶ γεννάδας, ὅστις γε πίνειν οἶδε καὶ βινεῖν πόνον; (739-740).

XII. EPISODE (vv. 830-904)

It has been indicated in the previous scene (810-811) that Dionysus will arbitrate the contest called to decide whose tragedies, Aeschylus' or Euripides,' are the better. In this scene Dionysus attends to the preliminaries. He shows no particularities of character or person, admonishing and advising both Aeschylus and Euripides as occasion demands. More positively, he serves as foil to both, asking questions and making statements which incite the tragedians to provocative thoughts. The scene, in short, is theirs, not his.

XIII. EPISODE (vv. 905-1499)

In this scene Dionysus is serving as arbiter and judge. He displays the following characteristics:

He is witty and humorous (944, 947, 968-970, 1012, 1036-1038, 1074-1075, 1089-1098, 1234-1236, 1242, 1278-1280, 1323-1324). During the ἀγών Dionysus furnishes comic relief. The anecdotes which he related concerning contemporary citizens and events undoubtedly drew a laugh from the spectators.

Upon several occasions Dionysus casts a reflection upon Euripides' background and his writings. Some of the statements are humorous, albeit unkind.

There are several instances when Dionysus deliberately misinterprets, for the sake of a laugh, remarks made with reference to literature. At times he is cheap, at times obscene.

He is easily influenced and impressible (921, 980-991, 1166, 1169, 1430, 1451). As the contestants present their arguments, they both, although presenting opposing views, receive Dionysus' approval. Dionysus readily accepts criticisms directed against himself, even assenting to them.

He is indecisive (1411-1413, 1433-1436). Dionysus, who is to judge between the poets, is unable to come to a decision even after the arguments have been presented. He then says that he will take the one who is able to offer the better advice for the city (1420-1421), but here again finds that he cannot choose between the two poets.

He is fickle (1468). Although Dionysus' purpose in journeying to Hades was to bring back Euripides (66-71), he evinces his fickleness by subsequently stating that any poet will do (ὅνπερ ἡ ψυχὴ θέλει -1468), and by ultimately choosing Aeschylus (1471). Moreover, his choice of Aeschylus is not based on reasoning, but is whimsical.

He is stupid (1023-1024, 1149, 1169, 1189-1198, 1278-1280). The irrelevant illustrations which Dionysus presents do not have any bearing upon the discussion. The inane remarks he makes indicate that he has difficulty following the argument. During the contest his interjections are either irrelevant or stupid.

He is alert and clever (1047-1048, 1175-1176, 1242). Dionysus is quick to compare Euripides' personal experience with

the harlots in his tragedies, and to explain, in practical fashion, the repetition which Euripides criticizes in Aeschylus' tragedies.

He is a partisan judge (916-917, 921, 931-932, 944, 947, 953, 980-991, 1012, 1023-1024, 1028-1029, 1047-1048, 1067-1068, 1074-1077, 1089-1098, 1158-1159, 1166, 1169, 1175-1176, 1220-1221, 1228, 1234-1236, 1242, 1245-1248, 1384-1388, 1393-1398, 1399-1401, 1404-1406, 1471). Dionysus' remarks are decidedly in favor of or against the individual contestant. He encourages, commends, rebukes and condemns in turn. His partisanship shifts constantly from one poet to the other. Perhaps Dionysus is pro-Euripidean more frequently than he is pro-Aeschylean, but this obviously has no effect on the final outcome of the contest.

He is impudent (1475-1477-1478). Not only does Dionysus make his anti-Euripidean decision without offering any rational explanation, but even goes so far as to base his condemnation of Euripides on a travesty of certain lines taken from the works of that poet.

He is shameless and risible (1471-1478). Euripides rightly asserts that Dionysus is a shameless character because of his ridiculous decision.

XIV. EPISODE (vv. 1500-1533)

In the Exodos Dionysus neither appears as a character nor is mentioned by the other actors.

CHAPTER III

NON-PERSONIFYING REFERENCES IN THE FROGS

In the extant writings of Aristophanes, Dionysus is mentioned by name twenty-nine times.[1] Of these references eight are found in the Frogs.[2] In this play the name, Dionysus, is used in identifying the protagonist. It is also used when referring specifically to the rites and festivals of the god.

The protagonist of the Frogs is named (22, 300, 631, 1150, 1479). The vocative, Διόνυσε , is employed by Xanthias (300), Aeschylus (1150), and Hades (1479) as they address Dionysus, the character in the play. Dionysus twice uses the nominative, Διόνυσος, in making a self-introduction (22, 631).

The name is included in a quotation (1211). During the literary contest, Euripides quotes from his play, the Hypsipyle.[3] Here the reference is to the thyrsus-bearing leader of the choral dance.

The god of the theatre is named (216, 368). Dionysus, the god of the Anthesteria, is mentioned in the song of the frogs. They exhort one another to sing the song which they, when alive,

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[1] O.J. Todd, Index Aristophaneus (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962), s.v. Διόνυσος , p. 57.

[2] vv. 22, 216, 300, 368, 631, 1150, 1211, 1479.

[3] Augustus Nauck (ed.), Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta (Lipsiae: in Aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1889), p. 594-599. Frag. 752.

used to sing in the upper world, ἐν Λίμναις , in honor of Nysaean Dionysus. Dionysus interrupts them before they have an opportunity to begin the song. They never make another attempt to resume the song.

In verse 368, the chorus of the Mystics utter the name of the god in identifying specific rites of Dionysus, in this instance, the comic festivals.

CHAPTER IV

DIONYSUS IN THE REST OF ARISTOPHANES

Of the references found to Dionysus in the Aristophanic corpus (excluding the Frogs),[1] the majority are non-descriptive, and are merely used as an expletive.

The name is used in oaths with νή and μά. This is by far the most frequent use of Dionysus' name. It is found in affirmative oaths in Av. 171, 501, 1370; Ec. 357, 422; Nu. 91, 519, 1000; Pax 1277; V. 1474; and in negative oaths in Ec. 344; Nu. 108; and Pax 109. The oath, as it is used in the above passages, is moderately strong and is uttered only by men.

The name is used in the expression of wishes. Twice, in Pax 267 and 442, Dionysus is the god named as wishes for peace are being expressed.

The name is used in invocations. Dionysus is invoked as prayers and sacrifices are being offered to him:

a) Ach. 247: this is a straightforward invocation. Dicaiopolis is celebrating the Rural Dionysia on a small scale.

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[1]Ach. 247, 1087; Av. 171, 501, 1370; Ec. 344, 357, 442; Eq. 536; Nu. 91, 108, 519, 606, 1000; Pax 109, 267, 442, 1277; T. 990; V. 1046, 1474.

[2]Abbreviations correspond to those found in Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott (comps.), A Greek-English Lexicon (Jones and Mackenzie, Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1966), p. xix.

b) Nu. 603-606; this invocation is within the parabasis and the god is the reveller, Dionysus; that is, the Dionysus of ecstasy and frenzy. He is mentioned along with three other divinities.

c) V. 1046: the reference here is found within the parabasis. The name, Dionysus, is used by the chorus as it describes the comic poet (Aristophanes) pouring libations to Dionysus as the god of the theatre and the comic festival.[1]

d) T. 990: in this choric song Dionysus is but one of seven deities invoked by the chorus to lend their support and grace to this part of the Thesmophoria. He is also perhaps being invoked as the god of the dramatic festival.[2]

The name is mentioned in connection with the theatrical or comic festivals. He is associated with these rites in Eq. 536.

In Pax 267 and Eq. 536, it is uncertain whether the priest of Dionysus or the statue of Dionysus which was in the theatre during a presentation is meant, although my preference is for the latter.

The name is used in identifying the priest of Dionysus. In Ach. 1087 there is a specific reference to the priest.

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[1]B.B. Rogers, The Comedies of Aristophanes (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1930), II, s.v. Vespae, v. 1046 and Nubes, v. 519. Rogers points out that the use of the name of Dionysus in this passage is very similar to that in Nu. 519 (see above, p.19).

[2]B.B. Rogers, The Comedies of Aristophanes (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1911), IV, s.v. Thesmophoriazusae, v. 990.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

I. DIONYSUS AS A HUMAN CHARACTER

The preceding sections of this study particularize the details to be gleaned about Dionysus from Aristophanes' plays. The principal source is, clearly, the Frogs. Conclusions to be drawn from the extant works of Aristophanes seem to me to be as follows.

The Comic Dionysus. In the Frogs, Dionysus is not a representation of a lofty, noble character, but is an individual who is capable of producing laughter by his absurd and ludicrous antics and words. He is the comic character, ὁ γέλοιος , the pot-bellied buffoon, the coward and the paradox. As the character of a comedy, he is able to bring about desired goals, often by means of shameful deeds. Euripides rightly asserts that Dionysus' final decision to take back Aeschylus is shameful (1474). Dionysus shows himself to be a veritable scoundrel when he parodies lines from Euripides' plays, the Hippolytus and the Aeolus (1471, 1475),[1] to back up his decision. When acting as the comic character, he devises and effects fantastic conceits. Who, for instance, would consider journeying to Hades, and who would think it feasible to bring back a dead poet to the upper world?

One characteristic which stresses the γέλοιον is the incongruous farrago of traits apparent in Dionysus. There are in

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[1]Deubner, op.cit., Ranae vv. 1471 and 1475.

him certain fundamental traits. He is a buffoon (198-199). He is also idiotic (184), cowardly (286-287), capricious (291), opportunistic (494-497), indecisive (1411-1413) and biased (916-917). Simultaneously he is sophistical (23-30), alert (1047-1048), of ready wit (61-62), courageous (644-666) and noble (738). The persistence and perseverance (268) which he displays are counterbalanced by his capriciousness (291). While he is a "literary critic" (66-69), he shows no critical judgment (1169). He proves that he can be courageous if necessary (644-666), but he is most cowardly (579-589). In the same statement he is called both a god and a man (486). At times he is the sophist (23-30); at other times he is clearly stupid and dull (1444).

The mixed assemblage of characteristics is especially marked in the contrast between his persistence and capriciousness. This contrast is particularly brought out by his unpredictable behavior as he serves in the role of judge and critic. Nor can it be said in this connection that he behaves as he does only for the sake of a laugh, for the consequences at times are rather weighty.

Dionysus, in his conversation with Heracles, is persistent in maintaining the excellence of Euripides as a tragedian, and in stating his desire to bring back this poet from Hades. The yearning or πόθος which he feels is so great that he is willing to undertake the hazardous journey in spite of the unfamiliar route, and willing to continue despite the inconveniences suffered (637-665).

The first part of the trip is successful; for he arrives at his destination. When he reaches the dwelling of Hades he acquires a more advantageous position; for he is appointed arbiter in the ensuing contest between Aeschylus and Euripides. When Hades states that Dionysus is to take the winner back to earth (1415-1416), he has every opportunity to achieve his goal.

During the contest, while admonishing and praising both Aeschylus and Euripides, he appears to show a preference for Euripides in verses 989-991, 1180-1181, 1214, 1227-1228, 1413, 1430, 1434, 1451,[1] 921, 1018, 1020, 1023, 1132-1133, 1134, 1149, 1158-1159, 1169, 1269.[2] By actual count Euripides gets the better share of Dionysus' partisan remarks during the ἀγών.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to ascertain what qualities Dionysus finds preferable in Aeschylus and Euripides. The text would suggest, however, that Dionysus is impressed by Euripides' logic and his ability to cause his spectators to examine issues (989-991 and possibly 413 and 434 if the term σόφος is meant to apply to Euripides). There is more personal abuse directed toward Euripides than Aeschylus (947).

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[1]But Stanford, op.cit., p. 196 points out that this is in reality a bad omen for Euripides, for Palamedes met a tragic fate before the Greeks reached Troy.

[2]Pro-Aeschylean or anti-Euripidean references are found in vv. 918-921, 944, 947, 952-953, 1012, 1047-1048, 1166, 1229, 1384, 1413, 1445.

There are indications that Dionysus is pro-Euripidean during the contest, perhaps even up to the final decision. He is identifying himself with Euripides in verses 1214 and 1227-1228. The prologues are referred to as "our prologues". As Hades calls for the decision, one might expect that Euripides has the better chance. No rational explanation is volunteered; Dionysus simply states that he will choose whomever his soul desires, and the choice just happens to be Aeschylus.

The assemblage of contradictory characteristics is also apparent in the juxtaposition of cleverness and stupidity. Dionysus shows that he can be clever and can speak with some authority upon a subject. He has, for example, fixed views concerning comedy (3-18), tragedy (92-97, 98-102) and individual poets (73-75, 84, 86). He shows his cleverness by defending, in a commendable fashion, the creative expressions of clever poets. Apparently Hades does not question his intelligence when he appoints him judge; in fact, Dionysus is described as an expert in the art (811).

When one might expect Dionysus, as arbiter, to display critical judgment, he appears stupid. During the contest, he shows his familiarity with literature as he comments upon a play by Aeschylus (930-932) and lifts lines from Euripides (1471, 1475). At the same time he is decidedly uncritical (1411), unable to follow arguments (1169, 1444), indecisive (1433), unthinking (1467-1468) and incoherent (968-970, 1036-1038, 1089-1098, 1195-1196, 1471, 1473).

The courage of Dionysus stands in sharp contrast to his extreme cowardice. The fact that he even contemplates making the hazardous journey to Hades is sufficient proof of his courage. Dangers do not deter him. Just the same, he is the cowardliest of gods and men. His cowardice is disgraceful as he seeks the protection of his slave (486); his physical reactions are violent (479).

A second characteristic which stresses the γέλοιον is Dionysus' permissiveness and even subservience while being master of a slave. In the first episode, he prohibits trite buffooneries. Despite the order, Xanthias does not hesitate to insert two at his own convenience. Dionysus exacts no punishment. In this same scene Dionysus does not appear to object when Xanthias talks back to him (33-34).

In the second scene, the malapert slave speaks sarcastically to his master (νὴ Δία μὴ καινοῦ γε -41), and interrupts Dionysus as he narrates his (imaginary) heroic achievements (51). Dionysus, for his part, chooses simply to ignore the remarks.

Upon occasion, Dionysus almost appears to be subservient to his slave. The persistent complaints of Xanthias cause Dionysus to attempt to hire a corpse to carry the traps (171-179). In later scenes it is Xanthias who retains courage in danger (285-308, 479-502, 605-606) while Dionysus calls upon others to come to his assistance (296, 286-287, 481-482). As master of a slave, Dionysus is a risible figure.

The combination of characteristics. Of the characteristics of Dionysus which are explicitly mentioned or tacitly suggested in the Frogs, almost without exception, they are traits which are found in ordinary human beings. The obvious difference rests in the manner in which the traits appear.

The nature of Old Comedy provides a partial explanation. Old Comedy replaces the μῦθος of tragedy with the λόγος ,[1] so that in place of the closely spun web of incidents found running throughout tragedy, there is freedom and inventiveness. Coherence is more likely to be found within individual episodes rather than between them.

The very nature of the plot of Old Comedy militates against the portrayal of a consistent character showing development throughout the play. Often the hero appears in relation to the particular episode rather than to the play as a whole. This is true of Dionysus as he is presented in the Frogs.

Dionysus is the protagonist in the Frogs, but his character does not show development. W.B. Stanford has fittingly written, "Dionysus ... is the single continuing element, the slender thread of continuity in the play."[2] This is a significant statement. Dionysus is found in all episodes but two, XI and XIV, so he does provide the continuing element. He is not, however, a dynamic force. As a

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[1]Francis M. Cornford, The Origin of Attic Comedy (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1934), p. 199.

[2]Stanford, op.cit., p. xxix.

comic character, he is lacking in inner coherence. While he is life-like in so far as he is invested with human qualities, he is not a living being. Aristophanes does not create a character who is in the process of development, but this, after all, is not his purpose. Rather he presents a character who has all too human traits. By so doing he achieves his goal, that is, he draws a laugh. At times he displays the foibles of humanity, at times the qualities which endear Dionysus to the audience, or at times the traits which make the protagonist a laughing-stock.

Dionysus, if he is consistent anywhere, is so in the individual episodes; thus he is the businessman (171-179), the joker (38-170), the judge (905-1481), the sophist (1-37). In the Frogs, as in the other plays of Aristophanes, there is an accumulation of episodes.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIONYSUS AS PROTAGONIST

There is no pattern of development to the characteristics of this god. He is, for instance, just as jocose, comical, buffoonish at the end as at the beginning of the Frogs. He is at scattered places courageous, but if the situation demands — and it does even more often — he can be cowardly. On two or three occasions he takes control of a scene and is quite clearly lord over his slave. On other occasions he takes a subordinate role and plays foil to other characters. He is a literary critic, both early in the play and almost continuously in the second half. The occasions on which he is

opportunistic, fickle, sophistical are scattered, never concentrated into one episode or sequence of episodes, nor do they lead to the delineation of other traits.

His character seems to depend on the situations in which he finds himself, the reverse (situations arising from his character) being not the case. Perhaps exceptional to the latter is the beginning of the play wherein it is his determination to go to Hades which produces the first two scenes. Once in Hades the situations dictate his traits of character. In other words, it looks as if Aristophanes contrived a plot and had his characters speak and act as the situations required. It is not, we may further conclude, the character of the personae that is important in this play, but the trend of the action.

Dionysus is presented in the Frogs as a human character, having human traits and displaying human likes and dislikes. The godhead of Dionysus is nowhere visible. Its absence is perhaps surprising and, in any case, welcome, for it is not necessary to the play and might well have cluttered it. Nor is the provincia of Dionysus, excepting his authority over comedy, needed by Aristophanes. At one point Dionysus claims to be a god and identifies himself (629-631). But how unimportant is his godhead is apparent for he suffers a whipping. On another occasion divinity amounts to so little that he is classed as ἄνθρωπος (1472). Then again it is remarkable that Aeschylus once retorts in no reverent way (1150). Far from being immortal, Dionysus in the Frogs talks as if he were an Athenian resi-

dent of 406 B.C., and had been such for many years past (17, 541, 916-917, 947, 968-970, 989-991, 1036, 1089-1098, 1400, 1422).

In the Frogs, the god, Dionysus is invoked or mentioned as a divinity. In the frog chorus, for example, the chorus mentions that it is about to sing the song which was sung in the marshland above in honor of Nysaean Dionysus. The protagonist of the play in no way associates himself with the deity mentioned. Furthermore, his interjections which are entirely irrelevant, prevent the frogs from singing the song. During the contest Euripides in a quotation from his play, the Hypsipyle, mentions Dionysus. Dionysus does not here suggest in any way that he is associated with the god, and the contest continues without a break. It appears from the passages mentioned above that Dionysus is not aligning himself with the deity.

We are then left with the question — just why is Dionysus in the Frogs? Why has he a part in the play? One might even ask — could another divinity have played such a part equally well? Zeus? Apollo? Ares? Two thoughts occur in reply: 1) no other could be both the butt of jokes and the instigator of comicalities as well as Dionysus; 2) and as presiding genius of drama he is peculiarly suited to the ἀγών being the one responsible for deciding which of the two dramatists would more benefit Athens.

If the theatre happened to be in need of a good poet, who would be more aware of the need and better qualified to make a search than the god of the theatre, Dionysus? Possible allusions to his

position as patron of drama do recur. He is described as an expert in the art. He speaks as though he is familiar with the theatre as he discusses tragedy (92-97). He also intimates that he has been a patron of the theatre for many years (16-18), in fact, he even discusses the plays of Aeschylus (930-932), the premières of which would have been staged well over fifty years previous to this time.[1]

It would, nevertheless, be very easy to overestimate the position of Dionysus as god of the theatre. While there may be limited significance to his divine role as patron god of the theatre, it must still be remembered that in the Frogs Dionysus is not really a judge. He interjects remarks during the ἀγών , sometimes pro-Euripidean, sometimes pro-Aeschylean, and these enliven the debate.

Dionysus is the thread of continuity, but any mortal or god could serve in that capacity. Dionysus, to put a point on it, is in the play for fun; he exhilarates the audience. He is the chief comic element insofar as personalities are concerned. That is by far his most important function.

When Aristophanes gets serious about expressing his preference for tragedians, Dionysus represents him and sees to it that the preference is clearly, albeit illogically, represented. The illogicality

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[1]There are indications, however, that the plays of Aeschylus were produced posthumously. Cf., G. Dindorf, Aeschylus Tragoediae Superstites (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962), III, p. 5, on the life of Aeschylus.

is, of course, intentional and the details of it part of the fun, but it does not obfuscate Aristophanes' earnestness (and decision) on the matter.

Dionysus, in short, is the comic protagonist in the Frogs.[1] Other comedies of Aristophanes admit similar treatment of other gods. Thus in the Peace, Hermes is stationed as protector of the little pots and pans, and in the Birds, Prometheus is shown creeping along under a parasol to avoid being detected by Zeus.[2] Evidently such a representation was tolerated, perhaps even welcomed, by the spectators.

One basic fact is obvious and must be recognized: the Dionysus of the Frogs is not the Dionysus of tragedy — the omnipotent god who displays his power, bursts his chains, punishes the unbelieving and solicits the adoration of his followers. He is, instead, the comic character.

III. DIONYSUS THE GOD

In contradistinction to the comic Dionysus of the Frogs, there is in the pages of Aristophanes the divine Dionysus who is more in keeping with the god of tragedy. These references have been included in chapters III and IV.

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[1]The play was even performed a second time. Hall & Geldart, op.cit., II, Ranae, Argument III.

[2]Hall & Geldart, op.cit., I, Pax vv. 200-202; Aves vv. 1494-1509.

Dionysus is named in oaths as are other Greek gods and demi-gods.[1] The occurrence of the name of Zeus far outnumbers that of any other divinity, but the number of oaths including the name of Dionysus roughly parallels that including the names of other divine beings.[2]

In the Aristophanic corpus, allusion is made to Dionysus, the reveller. Both such references associate the god with Mount Parnassus (Nu. 595-605; Ra. 1211-1213).

Obviously Dionysus is accepted as the god of the theatre and of the festivals as is illustrated by the use of his name in Ra. 368; Eq. 536, V. 1046; Ra. 216 and T. 990.

To the question asked at the beginning, Who and what is Dionysus in the pages of Aristophanes, my answer is: he is a god of productive nature, the god of drama, but in the play, the Frogs, he is treated as a human and is therefore merely a character, the protagonist actually, in the play.

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[1]P. Albert, Les Dieux et les déesses chez Aristophane (thesis) (Liège: 1941), p. 110.

[2]Ibid., Zeus is included in oaths 361 times, Apollo 38 times, Poseidon 35 times, Heracles 16 times, Dionysus 13 times, Hermes 9 times and others 50 times.

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